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STATE FOR AF/W, DRL/PHD, INR/AA AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2011

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: NGO ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SENEGAL:  
TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF A CLIFF

REF: A. 05 DAKAR 03208

[1](#)B. DAKAR 01205

Classified By: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) NGOs describe Senegal as being at one of the most vulnerable points in its post-independence history in terms of fundamental freedoms of expression, movement and association. RADDHO, a prominent local human rights organization, points to judicial independence as the key issue facing Senegal today. Civil society is increasingly determined to hold onto individual rights. END SUMMARY.

#### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S PERSPECTIVE

[1](#)2. (C) Local Amnesty International Director Demba Cire Bathily said the "most vicious" aspect of human rights violations now is the fact that government officials are using state apparatus to serve the interests of the ruling party. For example, Bathily said his telephone and those of people viewed by PDS members as opposing the party's policies are now regularly tapped. He also told us the Government threatens him with tax audits, and he has been receiving warnings from unidentified "third parties." All requests by non-PDS groups to hold public demonstrations are now systematically denied. The GOS monopolizes the media. For example, state-run television broadcasts repeated images of President Wade throughout the day.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Bathily, the Government also tried to prevent distribution of Amnesty's human rights report this year. Apparently, the GOS was concerned about Amnesty's listing in its report of works the GOS has forbidden Senegal's book stores from selling. One example of this was the most recent book by Abdou Latif Coulibaly, in which he described Wade as the mastermind behind the murder of a judge (Ref A). A movie based on that book was also banned. If the Customs Office permits any works opposed by the Government to enter the market, the GOS orders the works seized. Bathily reports censoring is now so systematic that printing companies refuse to publish any work they believe has been banned. He warned "Senegal has never been on such a dangerous cliff, threatening to fall."

#### RADDHO'S VIEW

[1](#)4. (C) Alioune Tine, Director of RADDHO, a prominent local human rights organization, largely shares Bathily's assessment. He thinks, however, that the worst human rights problem today is lack of judicial independence. Tine described the GOS as flagrantly manipulating the legal system to have opponents arrested and to have its judges issue rulings against them (or to lessen/drop charges when

politically expedient). He complained that there are still many dictatorships throughout Africa, but "the West no longer reacts to serious human rights violations." Echoing a growing sentiment, Tine recommended that Senegal should have a strong National Assembly, a ceremonial President, and an independent judiciary.

COMMENT

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15. (C) Outside observers often point to Senegal as a model for Africa in its protection of basic human rights, leading to a proliferation of political parties, a vibrant media, an active civil society and religious tolerance. We believe this is generally true, but the message is lost on Senegal's NGOs. Tine has told us he regularly meets with President Wade and directly expresses his concerns. Bathily admitted that human rights violations occurred in the past -- particularly in the approach to the elections that took place in 2000 -- but what is different he now charges, is that people are determined to hold onto their rights at any cost. While it may create the potential for political violence, it is also a testament to the fact that the concept of human rights has deep roots in Senegal. END COMMENT.  
JACOBS